Farewell to a gentle leader and friend

“Learn to be a friend to your client and their family. Be as close as you can to that herd. You are their partner in business.”

This was the advice Dr. Leland Allenstein gave to potential large-animal veterinarians while teaching at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine.

And this was the way Dr. Allenstein lived his life—a friend to the herd and their families. Dr. Allenstein passed away, October 22, 2011. “He will be missed by his family, his friends, his colleagues at the UW-SVM, and the countless veterinarians and dairy producers whose lives he impacted,” said Daryl Buss, dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine.

Leland C. “Doc” Allenstein was born on January 25, 1925, in Lamont, Iowa. After receiving a doctor of veterinary medicine degree from Iowa State University in 1950, he began his veterinary practice in Whitewater, Wisconsin. Six months later, he purchased the practice. For more than 40 years, dairy clients and their families benefited from his expertise, wisdom, and thoughtful care. He was a natural instructor and enjoyed explaining his diagnoses and treatments.

Dr. Allenstein possessed the unique ability to relate to scholar and dairy producer alike. A strong supporter of educating more young veterinarians interested in large animal work, he was a driving force in the establishment of the UW School of Veterinary Medicine. In 1987, Dr. Allenstein became a clinical professor and later a faculty associate. He taught soon-to-be veterinarians while maintaining his practice with 18 herds in the Whitewater area, which gave his students the opportunity to learn needed science, while gaining practical knowledge from a hands-on veterinarian. He received numerous teaching awards including the SCAVMA Clinical Teacher Award from the American Veterinary Medical Association, a top teaching honor in the nation for a veterinarian.

“When we would have large animal rounds in the VMTH clinic Dr. Allenstein would stand to the back and listen patiently to the discussion about the benefits of different laboratory tests and other diagnostic techniques that could only be offered at the school, along with a lengthy list of differential diagnoses,” said Jerry Gaska, a large animal veterinarian for Gaska Dairy Healthy Services, Columbus, Wisconsin and Dairy Manager for Nehls Brothers Farms, in Juneau, Wisconsin. “He then would gently comment about what, if he was in the field, he would recommend for the cow. He kept reminding us students that there is no lab test or imaging technique that can substitute for a complete physical exam. He instilled in me the importance of communicating with the client to get a good history and to then thoroughly examine the cow.”

In addition to clinical practice and teaching, Dr. Allenstein made a tremendous mark on industry through the columns he wrote for Hoard’s Dairyman and with his role as chief veterinarian at World Dairy Expo for more than 25 years. His reputation and compassion as a veterinarian was so great that competitors brought cows from as far away as Canada or Vermont to the UW Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital during the World Expo so that “Doc” Allenstein could take a look at them.

“Lee epitomized the “art” of clinical practice,” said Sheila McGuirk, professor of large animal medicine. “Whether it was a dairy cow in a commercial herd or an elite show cow at World Dairy Expo, Lee would listen, observe and “see” where many didn’t take the time or didn’t have the “eye” to catch subtle changes. Lee always did the most for his patients and clients. He knew the importance of family - people and cows. He rose to the top of his profession but he loved to pass along knowledge, to share his gifts and he never stopped giving back.”

Dr. Allenstein served as president of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners and received its highest honor—the Practitioner of the Year Award, in 1982. He was elected a member of the National Academy of Practice and served on the American Veterinary Medical Association’s Council on Education.

In honor of his tremendous teaching skills, the School of Veterinary Medicine named its dairy teaching herd the Leland Allenstein Dairy Teaching Herd in his honor. Today, the herd continues to give students access and opportunities to all aspects of dairying and veterinary medicine.

Dr. Allenstein was also named a Distinguished Service Award winner by the Wisconsin Holstein Association, Industry Man of the Year by World Dairy Expo, and Wisconsin Veterinarian of the Year. He is also an honorary member of the Klussendorf Society and the 2006 National Dairy Shrine Guest of Honor.

Dr. Allenstein was also dedicated to his community. He was on the board of directors of First Citizens State Bank for more than 40 years, served on the First English Lutheran Church council, and was past president of the UW-Whitewater Quarterback Club.

“Doc” Allenstein was loved and respected by his family, his community, and the veterinary profession. A compassionate man, he will be remembered as a warm, gracious, sincere, fun-loving person and the ultimate veterinary practitioner, scientist, and teacher.
Two dairy herds merge to improve student education

The UW School of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences combined the Leland Allenstein Dairy Teaching Herd with the CALS teaching herd at the end of August 2011. The expanded herd will continue to be to be known as the Allenstein Teaching dairy herd but will serve the needs of both the SVM and CALS. Cows in the combined herd will be housed during lactation, at the soon to be renovated CALS Dairy Cattle Center (DCC) next to Babcock and the SVM, and the Dry cows will be housed at the Arlington Agricultural Research Station 20 miles north of Madison.

The SVM purchased the Allenstein herd to ensure that Veterinary Medical students continue to have access to quality dairy education opportunities. The herd provides pre-veterinary and veterinary students a chance to experience working with cows in an on-farm milking herd environment. By working with the herd, students gain experience with livestock handling, computerized dairy records, and everyday dairy management. The herd also offers students additional experience in animal production.

The herd was named in honor of of Dr. Leland Allenstein, a noted veterinarian and teacher, because of his remarkable influence on students, veterinarians, producers, and the dairy industry. “I had the pleasure of discussing the merger of the herds with Dr. Allenstein before he passed away, and he was very pleased with our new partnership with CALS as a means to strengthen both of our dairy programs” said Dean Daryl Buss of the School of Veterinary Medicine.

The CALS and SVM partnership was developed after CALS received $3 million to renovate the DCC facility and both units realized that merging their herds would create an extraordinary opportunity for students and the university.

Dairy cattle related teaching will be transferred to the DCC so as to meet the needs of both the SVM and CALS. Mike Peters, the CALS herd manager, will be responsible for both herds.

“I am excited having access to dairy cows in a newly renovated facility within a five-minute walk of the SVM and the opportunities we can create for our students,” said Nigel Cook, clinical associate professor in food animal production medicine.

Allenstein leaves gift to herd

Dr. Leland Allenstein gifted $100,000 from his estate to help support the Dairy Teaching Herd. The School of Veterinary Medicine continues to seek private gifts to support the herd. The goal of the endowment is $1 million where annual interest will be used to help support the maintenance and health care costs of the herd. With the Allenstein gift, the endowment has grown to over $730,000.

If you would like to make a gift in support of the Allenstein Dairy Teaching Herd, your check can be made payable to the “UW Foundation—Allenstein Teaching Herd” written on the memo line. Call 608-265-9692 or mail your donation to:

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